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RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 2222
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C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 000386

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/12/2017
TAGS: [ASCH](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BL](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH NEW EDUCATION MINISTER

REF: LA PAZ 1711 (2006)

Classified By: Ambassador Philip S. Goldberg
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

11. (C) On February 8, the Ambassador made his first call on new Education Minister Victor Caceres. Unlike meetings with former Minister Patzi, the meeting with Caceres was friendly, with the new minister stating that he would maintain an "open door" and expressing his desire for a regular dialogue with the Ambassador. The Ambassador introduced the minister to a wide range of USG assistance programs, focusing on education, but also explained U.S. aid in the areas of social inclusion, economic development, and access to justice. Caceres expressed his appreciation with regard to U.S. efforts to help Bolivia's disadvantaged. The Ambassador raised the GOB's education reform bill, and expressed concern about the impact the proposed law could have on American schools in Bolivia. Caceres explained that the GOB's legislation will take into account the needs of Bolivia's private schools, and that the Ambassador needn't worry. While the details on changes to the GOB's education reform bill are still undefined, we are heartened by the new minister's apparent sincerity and sensitivity to our concerns.
End Summary.

Atmospherics

12. (C) On February 8, the Ambassador (accompanied by the Embassy's management counselor) made his first call on new Education Minister Victor Caceres. Unlike previous meetings with former Education Minister Patzi, Caceres was friendly, stating the ministry would maintain an "open door," and expressing his desire for a regular dialog with the Ambassador.

USG Assistance

¶3. (C) The Ambassador introduced the minister to a wide range of USG assistance programs, focusing on education, but also explained our aid in the areas of social inclusion, economic development, and access to justice. The Ambassador described the USG's support for education projects, emphasizing the Fulbright and other exchange programs. He then explained our efforts to expand outreach to Bolivia's indigenous peoples, noted our indigenous scholarships for studying English in Bolivia, and highlighted Embassy book donations to rural communities. The Ambassador informed the minister about USAID's programs to promote social inclusion, economic development, and access to justice. Caceres expressed his appreciation with regard to U.S. efforts to help Bolivia's disadvantaged.

Education Reform

¶4. (C) The Ambassador then referred to prior discussions with the ministry and Vice President Alvaro Garcia Linera on the GOB's education reform bill, and expressed concern about the impact the proposed law could have on American schools in Bolivia. The Ambassador explained that American schools abroad must meet U.S. accreditation standards, and that a lack of accredited schools could result in the mission having difficulty attracting new officers. The Ambassador reiterated that American schools would try to change to meet the spirit of the law (i.e., instruction of indigenous languages) as long as it did not impact their accreditation. He noted that foreign schools with significant numbers of local students produce graduates who study abroad, but later often return to Bolivia to live and work.

¶5. (C) Minister Caceres responded that he intends to consult with urban teachers, the Catholic Church, and private schools prior to the bill's passage. He explained that he had already met with the Church and private school representatives, including someone from the American Cooperative School (ACS). The minister explained that the GOB will respect existing "covenios" (agreements) with the private schools. In the case of ACS, which has no formal agreement with the GOB, the Minister stated that the GOB would respect its status as well. He continued by stating that he hoped that private schools would be receptive to introducing more "interculturalidad" (diversity) in their curricula. Caceres explained that the GOB's legislation will take into account the needs of Bolivia's private schools, and that the Ambassador needn't worry.

Comment

¶6. (C) Minister Caceres appears to be a less ideologically rigid interlocutor than his predecessor. While the details on changes to the GOB's education reform bill are still undefined, we are heartened by the new minister's apparent sincerity and sensitivity to our concerns. End Comment.
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